

ALBERTA UNION OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES

BARGAINING UPDATE

DECEMBER 8, 2021

**LIVING WATERS
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

LOCAL: 071
CHAPTER: 012

ALL STAFF

EMPLOYER SEEKS CONCESSIONS AND TWO-TIER WAGES

As we reported in our last bargaining update, we had agreed to pause negotiations to see how broader public-sector bargaining plays out across the province. Since then, the Government of Alberta took their demands for rollbacks off the table and provided for wage increases in 2023, allowing for a settlement with their direct employees that our fellow AUPE members are currently voting on.

Unfortunately, Living Waters took a different approach—they want two tier wages, rollbacks in our sick leave provisions, no improvements to wages and benefits, and they are even proposing a \$300 cut in our health spending account to convert it to a flexible spending account.

While we struggle with the demands of an increased workload caused by massive layoffs last year, our employer is asking for concessions from us that go above and beyond what the provincial government is asking them to table.

Wages

The employer has proposed a four-year agreement with zero increases in each of the four years. They have also proposed new lower paid classifications for educational assistants (EAs) and elementary school secretaries. Although they stated that the lower rates of pay would only apply to new hires, existing employees could be affected as well, for example in terms of their earning potential over time, layoff provisions etc.

The employer wants to create a two-tiered classification system for EAs, with one tier for those who are certified and a second lower paying tier for those who are not. The employer says

that EAs without certification are overpaid compared to the provincial average, while ignoring years of experience. These employees have been doing the exact same work as their certified counterparts in a rural area where there are not many certified potential employees.

Similarly, the employer is seeking wage rollbacks for secretaries in elementary schools, as if that work is somehow less valuable than if it were being performed in a junior or senior high school.

Maintenance would also be impacted by the employer's proposal for call out pay as set out in Article 16.04. Where currently a worker who is called to work after hours must be paid a minimum of three hours at the overtime rate, the employer wants to reduce that to as little as half an hour if the work could be done over the phone or internet. This is a slap in the face to those workers who are woken up in the middle of the night or have a family event disrupted.

Sick Leave and Health Benefits

The employer's proposed changes to the way sick leave operates is of great concern to your negotiating team. Currently, members accrue sick leave at a rate of 2 days/month for the first year and, in the second year, are given 90 days sick leave which refreshes every year. What the employer is proposing is a one-time top up for current, full-time staff to 200 days in a sick leave bank and going forward, all staff would accrue sick leave at a rate of 2 days/month to a maximum of 200 days in the sick leave bank, with no annual replenishment.

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New staff, or anyone who had used up their sick leave, would start at zero so it would take them about ten years to reach the maximum 200 days and that would occur if they never took a sick day – a rarity among workers who work in close contact with children amid a global pandemic. With quarantine, self-isolation and medical appointments eating into sick time, we feel this is an unrealistic and short-sighted demand.

Your negotiating team proposed more flexibility around your Health Spending Account (HSA), allowing you to split the benefit between your HSA and a Personal Spending Account. The employer said it would consider broadening what kinds of expenses could be covered if we accepted a reduction in the total amount from \$950 to \$650.

Your negotiating team suggested several other improvements to your benefit package, which the employer rejected out of hand, although they did indicate that employees over 65 may continue to be covered, beginning Jan. 1, 2022, although they did not have the full details.

Step in the Wrong Direction

In contrast to our employer's approach, your negotiating team had proposed modest improvements to our compensation, including equity for those picking up casual shifts who get paid a lower rate of pay for the same work, as well as wage increases to help keep up with rising prices. The employer is uninterested.

On a more positive note, the employer has finally agreed to change the job title of Teacher Assistant to Educational Assistant, an acknowledgement that those roles are intended to assist students, not teachers.

Discussing Our Next Steps Together

We're hosting a Zoom meeting (link below) on Sunday, Jan. 9th at 2:00 p.m. so that your negotiating team can answer any questions you might have, and we can talk about what our next steps should be. It is quite clear to us that the employer is not prepared to show us the respect we deserve at the bargaining table, and we need to talk about what we are prepared to respond together.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting on Jan. 9th.

Zoom Meeting Info

Topic: Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No 42 Bargaining

Time: Jan 9, 2022 02:00 PM Edmonton

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97540995766>

Meeting ID: 975 4099 5766

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Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/adVzOKu0l>

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